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MotoGP

Heyday hero...

The feature interview in this issue comes from 1980s 500cc icon Wayne Gardner – one of our favourite heyday riders – part one discusses the Australian's part in the new World GP Bike Legends event at Jerez in June and also how racing stars and heroes are created

Photo from www.motogp.com







No stopping Blue...

Yamaha's resurgence in AMA competition continues. Cooper Webb, team-mate to 2014 Lucas Oil AMA 250MX Champion Jeremy Martin, picked up his second 250SX victory on the bounce at Anaheim last week on the YZ250F and is heading a tight title chase after just three rounds with Tyler Bowers, Jessy Nelson and Zach Osborne all involved

Photo by Ray Archer



AMA-MX



**MX**

High fives...

Historic stuff at the 2015 Dakar with Marc Coma earning KTM's fourteenth win in a row and extending his own personal haul of triumphs up to five, equalling the tallies of Cyril Despres and Cyril Neveu and just one shy of motorcycle record holder Stephane Peterhansel. The 9000km chase was – as usual – fraught with difficulty. Wet salt sands caused mechanical trouble for many and the final stage was also prematurely cut due to the conditions. Less than half the bikes that started the race reached the finish

Photo by Red Bull Content Pool

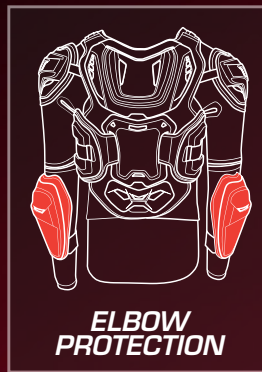




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AMA-SX

LOS ANGELES

ANAHEIM 2 · JANUARY 17th · Rnd 3 of 17

450SX winner: Ken Roczen, Suzuki

250SX West winner: Cooper Webb, Yamaha

KR A2 KO

By Adam Wheeler,
Photos by Ray Archer

KEN ROCZEN ESCAPED FREE FOR A SECOND WIN OF 2015 IN WHAT WAS A NIGHT OF BUMPING AND BARGING AT THE ANGEL STADIUM. READ ON FOR PERSPECTIVE AND STEVE MATTHES SPEAKS EXCLUSIVELY WITH CHAD REED





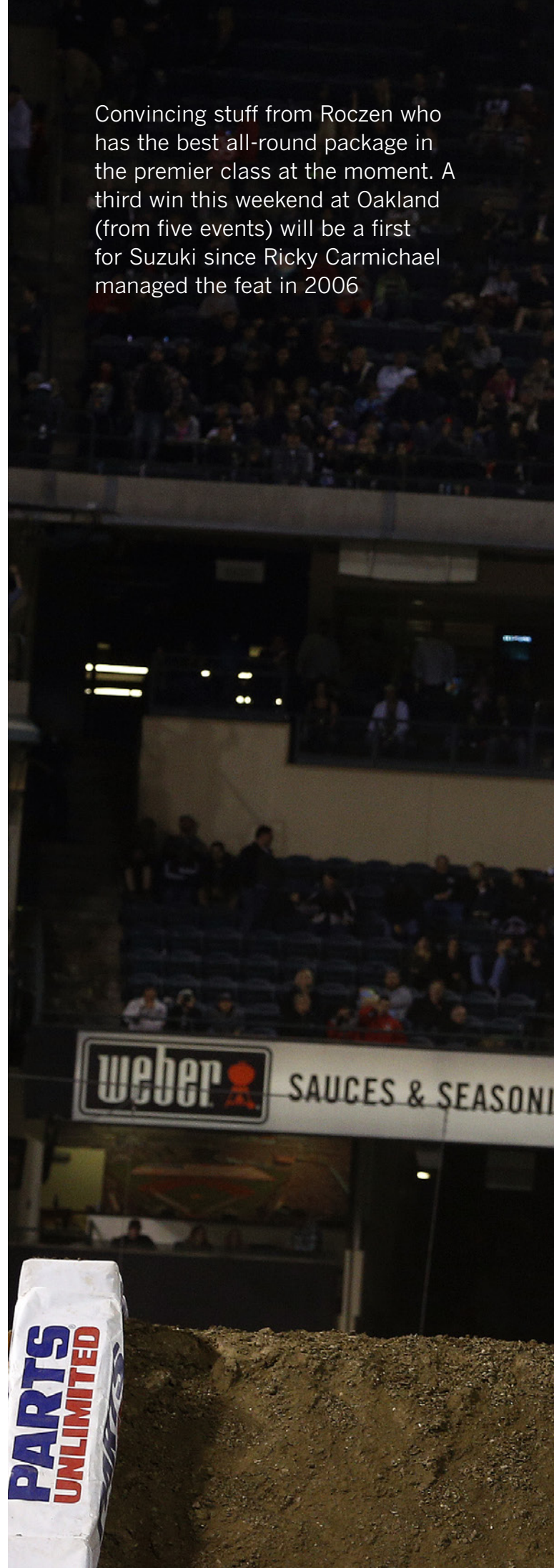
Any doubts about RCH Racing's Ken Roczen's credentials for the 2015 AMA 450SX championship were virtually banished to the upper tiers of the Angel's Stadium by lap three of the second Anaheim fixture. This was an undisputed and largely comfortable second victory of the year for the German who has earned a significant spoil in his career every season since turning Pro at the Grand Prix of Portugal in 2009 as a fifteen year old.

Roczen's flight to victory was set in the formative stages as a positive start and steer around hole-hotter Arma Energy Racing's Jimmy Albertson and BTO Sports KTM's Andrew Short immediately led to an escape and routine seventeen laps ahead of former team-mate Red Bull KTM's Ryan Dungey (who amusingly could not complete any post-race interviews until a hysterical and boisterous female fan close to the podium was placated with a quick hug). Roczen is quickly filling Ryan Villopoto's void as arguably the most sensational and impressive athlete on a dirt bike in the American scene. Already a national motocross champion, Ken only has to set his sights on a lucrative 450SX title to ensure a comprehensive collection of crowns by the age of 21; only MXGP then stands ahead for true Jean-Michel Bayle levels of renown. Motocross has had their version of 'Marc Marquez' for a while but the promise seems to be turning ripe after just three rounds in which Roczen has gone 1-2-1.

"I started off a bit rusty. The track was very special and peaked up; not easy to ride," Roczen said next to the podium and with barely a trace of exasperation. "I knew at the track walk that I would not stress about first or second practice. It was tricky with ruts and a long lap-time; it was interesting tonight. We got good starts when we needed to. I was super-happy with the bike."

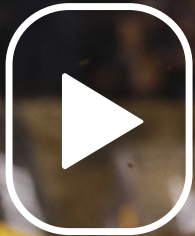
At Anaheim, busy with public again, the Suzuki at the front almost lost the headlines. As one journalist remarked on the trudge across the dry dirt that was tacky in places (Geico Honda's Eli Tomac: "The kind of track that would come up and bite you."), the athletes on the 450SX podium (Roczen, Dungey and Tomac) were not the ones people wanted to hear from.

Convincing stuff from Roczen who has the best all-round package in the premier class at the moment. A third win this weekend at Oakland (from five events) will be a first for Suzuki since Ricky Carmichael managed the feat in 2006





AMA-SX A2



PLAY



PLAY



Just as Anaheim 3 almost twelve months ago will be remembered for the triumph that showed TwoTwo Motorsports Chad Reed was not a spent force in the smelting trough that is AMA Supercross competition, this outing was also remarkable for the Australian. The clip of his amazing tangle with American Honda's Trey Canard can be seen by clicking the logo on this page and his confusing and hurried disqualification for an unsubtle form of retribution (despite his claims to the contrary) resulted in the first DQ of his career. Reed waited on the stadium floor to quiz and remonstrate with AMA officials who later spoke to leading American website www.racersonline.com and revealed their reasoning for the black flag was for fear of more on-track entangles between the pair. The crash that provoked the controversial scenes was clearly a racing incident as Reed changed lines coming over the double onto the principal straight and Canard – again with a poor start – was already committed. Both were fortunate to escape injury although fans and race staff are bound to be watching the '41' and '22' when the show drives north to Oakland next weekend.

Reed was correct to cite examples of some other heavy riding tactics and Canard's teammate Cole Seely can feel harshly done-by through some aggression by JGR Yamaha's Justin Barcia that dumped the 450SX rookie out of frantic scenes in the tussle for the podium spots behind a departing Roczen. Short was a faller and the supercross injury list grew as BTO Sport KTM's Justin Brayton did not make the Main Event due to a suspected broken collarbone after the Semi stage of the event. JGR's Weston Peick was already out of the running with a broken foot.

The bumping had started earlier in the night as Yamalube Star Yamaha's Cooper Webb took aim at Monster Energy Pro Circuit's Tyler Bowers (see clip) and won his first AMA 250SX Main two corners from the finish line. Troy Lee KTM's Jessy Nelson had set-up the exciting finale by crashing out of the lead on the landing from the 'over-under' tunnel and Bowers' tactics on the last lap were highly questionable by leaving room for Webb to attack. The Yamaha

man had been pushing throughout the race and was certainly the fastest, and most deserving, in the class on this occasion but the sprint had been Bowers' to lose (and he also let the red plate slip through his grasp also). Perhaps too much is expected of the former Arenacross champion in his first high profile tilt at 250SX glory but his capitulation – from which he was fortunate to still salvage second – will be one of those small disappointments in what has still be a breakthrough campaign so far.

Fourth place was the best to-date for Barcia; many observers OTOR spoke to were still unconvinced of the former 250SX Champ's comfort and suitability on the Yamaha. It is a move that is bound to take time and Team Manager Jeremy Albrecht commented as much on the morning trackwalk. Red Bull KTM's Dean Wilson is also building into the season, his first full term in 450SX, and A2 was more progress with eighth place and a personal highest on the 450SX-F. RCH Racing were doubly happy after Broc Tickle's fifth position signified a bumper day of work for the well-financed and slick operation.

With a twelve point lead Roczen is now firmly the big target in a championship that will soon dart around the USA fourteen times in the following fifteen weeks. What will be key to narrowing the chase? Tomac had some insight: "It's the starts; it is kinda annoying when everyone says that but there are too many fast guys to be in seventh or sixth right now. If a 'Roczen' gets out there and holeshots or I get out there and he's in sixth then it is going to be the same story; it is something quite special."

Anaheim 2 was a noticeably different prospect from the season-opener. People were glad to see the re-establishment of past features like the over-under bridge





MONSTER ENERGY



Jason Anderson could not repeat his Anaheim 1 podium. Roczen's training partner was held up on the first lap and spent the rest of the Main playing catch-up to seventh

AMA-SX A2





Jessy Nelson was primed for a second win this year until he erred on the bridge landing. The KTM man recovered to take sixth. Dean Wilson chats with Pit Beirer (above)



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A good night for Ryan Dungey who is starting to build into the season. The former champion took a second podium finish and is Roczen's nearest challenger after 3 of 17

AMA-SX A2



AMA-SX A2



AMA-SX CLASSIFICATION & CHAMPIONSHIP

AMA 450SX RESULT

Riders

1	Ken Roczen, GER	Suzuki
2	Ryan Dungey, USA	KTM
3	Eli Tomac, USA	Honda
4	Justin Barcia, USA	Yamaha
5	Broc Tickle, USA	Suzuki

AMA 250SX WEST RESULT

Riders

1	Cooper Webb, USA	Yamaha
2	Tyler Bowers, USA	Kawasaki
3	Justin Hill, USA	KTM
4	Zach Osborne, USA	Husqvarna
5	Malcolm Stewart, USA	Honda

AMA 450SX STANDINGS (AFTER 3 OF 17 ROUNDS)

Riders	Points
1 Ken Roczen	72
2 Ryan Dungey	60
3 Jason Anderson	51
4 Eli Tomac	46
5 Trey Canard	43

AMA 250SX WEST STANDINGS (AFTER 3 OF 9 ROUNDS)

Riders	Points
1 Cooper Webb	64
2 Tyler Bowers	60
3 Jessie Nelson	60
4 Zach Osborne	54
5 Justin Hill	53



“DUMBASS CHOICES...”

By Steve Matthes

All of the racing at Anaheim 2 was overshadowed by the black flag that was thrown for Chad Reed for his retaliatory move on Trey Canard after the latter had jumped into the Australian the corner before trying to make a pass. Canard had some harsh words for Reed, Reed had some harsh words for the FIM who dished out the penalty and in the end one of the sports biggest stars getting disqualified was the main subject afterwards. Long after everyone had left, we caught up to Reed to get his take on the wild night that was...

Let's talk about the main thing, coming together with Trey. Understandably you weren't too pumped and showed him that when he got up... and then the black flag for you.

The first incident I didn't see or feel that one coming. Trey just jumped right on the back of me, so that was kind of crazy. I got up and obviously just kind of threw him a little elbow like what the fuck? But other than that I didn't really think too much more of it. Then I got right back around to the finish line and they were showing a black flag with a cross on it. I just thought it was a black flag, I didn't even know. So I was kind of confused and was like: 'is that for me?!' I rode another lap, seen it again, rode another lap and then the whole time I was like: 'really, this is happening right now?' I didn't even really know what to do. I was like, can I just ride it out and deal with it after or do I just stop? I ended up just stopping and [AMA official John] Gallagher didn't even come over to me...

Didn't you really have an idea of what happened?

Obviously I knew that I ran into Trey but for me I didn't think it was that big a deal. Sure, I threw him a little love tap but no worse than what he just did for me.

No worse than what we've seen over the years a bunch of times from different riders and the black flag doesn't come out...

Yeah, the black flag's weird. That's really the biggest question. I don't think that Trey's incident was that awesome and I also agree that I shouldn't have retaliated and did that, but we both did it. But to get black flagged right away within a half lap... The replay, I watched it on TV and you do the math of from the first incident to when they actually did a replay of the second incident, the time lapse doesn't add up. So he [Gallagher] didn't even see a replay; he claims he did. Kind of bullshit to be honest. I don't believe that a black flag was appropriate. A slap on the wrist or a fine or whatever after the race, that's one thing. I'm no angel and not claiming to be. Like I said, I totally retaliated and shouldn't have but I don't think that it was appropriate for a black flag.

And your meetings with Kevin from the AMA or John from FIM, what did they tell you? What were they saying?

I don't understand their side 100%. Obviously I'm always going to want everything to fall my way naturally, but for me I'm confused by it a little bit, to be honest. He says we didn't want a brawl on the track, we didn't want a throw down. And it's like, really? Are Trey Canard and I going to go and throw punches? Even to the point where he made a comment that we had a "heated conversation" after the race. And it really wasn't. It was Trey come up to me and asked me what was I thinking, which then triggered me asking him what was he thinking. Then I was just confused by the whole thing because I'm like, 'wow, you jumped on me. How can you ask me what I was thinking?' So I was kind of confused by that. Then his comment was: "You're the biggest whiner in the sport" and then rode



off. But anyway, like I said, I think at the end of the day Trey and I are big boys. We weren't about to throw down and throw punches. If we are I think we should go out and maybe get off the premises and throw some punches but I don't think that's Trey's style nor mine.

You've lost points, you've lost money, you've lost sponsorship...

It's a big call. In the big scheme of things I went 10-10, I was in top 5, battling for a top 5 tonight. It's a long, long championship. At no point was I out of this thing. Sure, in the short-term it looks like I'm not there and not getting the results but I feel like we're a few little things out of it and we should be right back in to being a podium guy again. So for them to just throw something so gnarly out there like that, and pretty much take me out of the title chase, it's a big call. That's why I think at the end of the day motos at the level that we are, all the race teams from the privateers up to the factory teams, they've come so far and they're so good and so much effort and money and budget goes into these things. If you watch Formula 1 on TV, it's the first thing they do is there's an incident and it comes across the bottom of the screen and the stewards are going to discuss it after the race and make their decision after the race.

It's not one guy in 30 seconds making a decision...

Exactly. That's really my biggest thing. I'm not sitting here and saying that I was right in my decision-making as well, but I think a black flag was pretty steep. Like you said, they've set a precedence and we'll see. Are they going to start black flagging people? I deserved a good slap on the hand. If you want to fine me, fine me. Take my massive pay that I got tonight away from me or something like that. It's bizarre.

I didn't talk to Trey. I went over there but he was gone, but Racer X did, and one of the things he said was you went outside the lap before, so he was anticipating you doing that again. That's why he jumped to the inside. I haven't seen the video. But thoughts on that?

From a professional point of view and a rider's point of view, you don't just go off of what I did the lap before. Blocking your line, protecting your line, obviously that was one position that you were very vulnerable on the inside. Kenny passed Davi right there. I think Dungey might have passed me right there. It's a passing spot.

I think Trey got Barcia there with that kind of move...

Exactly, so from a rider's point of view it's just not for us to go around. It's not my first go-around. Jumped to the inside, stopped him being able to do it. You don't just commit and assume that I'm going to take the outside line. It's just crazy to me. For me, that's why Trey Canard will never be a Supercross champion. He just makes dumbass choices like that. One hell of a talented dude but I just question whether he'll have all the pieces of the puzzle.



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It's not just what you see the moment you need to be at your best, it's that you were passionate enough to spend years of moments chewing up dirt to get there.



RT CUTS





INFORMED OPINIONS

By Adam Wheeler, Photos by Ray Archer

PEOPLE ARE ONLY TOO HAPPY TO OFFER THEIR VIEWS ON RYAN VILLOPOTO'S TRANSITION TO MXGP AND WITH THE 2015 FIM WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ONLY SIX WEEKS AWAY FROM LAUNCHING IN QATAR. WE DECIDED TO SPEAK TO THE THREE LAST AMERICANS WHO MADE THEIR PRESENCE FELT IN GRAND PRIX FOR THEIR INSIGHT ON THE MAN AND THE MOVE



ZACH OSBORNE

"I was pretty surprised that he went for it. I thought he wanted to retire. It is a big move. He could have left [the sport] as a four times straight supercross champion."

"I don't think you can just adapt to MXGP in one year. Maybe he will just turn up there and smoke everybody, I don't know but I find it hard to believe. One thing that he has going for him is having enough money to buy comfort, you know? Whereas when I went there I was flat broke. In the end I found comfort, especially with a family that I met while over there which was great. I don't foresee him having that. He will have Tyla [Ratray, Monster Energy KRT team-mate] and maybe Thomas [Covington, Monster Energy CLS Kawasaki MX2 rider] will stay with him and that will make it a bit more like home but I think it will still be hard particularly after he has had everything that he could want in America. It is a big change."

"Nobody really asked me about GPs – not even Thomas – and I was a bit surprised by that. He [Covington] is young and I was also when I went there. Ryan will have a lot of people around him that will say what he needs to know."

"When it is rough then Gautier [Paulin, HRC Honda World Motocross] is one of the best in world. When the track is French-esque then he is frickin' good. Even a rider like Nagl; when he is 'on' then he is so hard to beat because he is solid. There are a lot of guys, like Desalle, and I don't think Ryan is going there just to be head-to-head with Tony [Cairolì, Red Bull KTM and six times world champion + defending number one]. For the Championship maybe but for GP wins there are more people to beat. Some of the tracks are really special. Uddevalla [Sweden] is just weird, Loket [Czech Republic], French tracks, Italian tracks; it is not easy to go there and do those. Maybe he will just blow my mind and go 1-1 at Uddevalla! I think he will be good in the sand because he will be fit."

The 25 year old current Rockstar Energy Husqvarna Factory Racing contested MX2 Grand Prix between 2008 and 2012, winning one round, scoring numerous podium finishes as well as a British Championship

"He is coming in as 'the attacker'. Everybody knows who he is. When there are only Europeans there then the people go for the riders from their countries. When there are others then the Europeans [fans] kinda group together! They are not just Spanish, Italians or French anymore! There might be some times when he is a little uncomfortable by the atmosphere. Tony has a huge following and if he could block that out then it would help, but it could be tough at times."

"Ryan has never been the outsider. He has been the 'Tony' in the situation more than anything. It will be a huge adjustment and if he can 'make it' within three GPs then maybe he can make a run at the title. If he takes seven rounds to get going – and in the first couple he's top five-ish – then it could be over before it has started."

"Tony always manages to be there every race. I think it was in the middle of 2012 at Uddevalla where he DNF-ed and lost a 49 point lead and gave Desalle the red plate...and then he went on a run that gave him the championship a few motos before the end of the season; that was pretty crazy. Tony is quite the competitor and doesn't get hurt. If you are not going fast enough mid-race then he will just hunt you down. I think cutting the GP motos down to thirty minutes was also a bit unfair on him. I think there is a perception that he's hanging out, eating pizza, on a boat in Sicily when actually he's f**king grafting. I think he is one of the hardest workers out there but doesn't put much attention on it."

"I watch the GPs every weekend anyway. We normally get the races during the same week, so I always keep up and visit the websites. It is cool to keep track."

JIMMY ALBERTSON

26 years old and now co-proprietor of his own team Arma Energy Racing in AMA Supercross and Motocross. Albertson joined the Martin Honda MXGP crew in 2010, taking a best finish of eighth place overall at the Grand Prix of Netherlands

"I was definitely shocked he went because he has been so strict with his programme and that is why he has been so successful. It will be hard to do the traveling that you need to do in the GP series as well as the testing and stuff [and keep the routine]. So I think it was a shock but it is also very cool and it is awesome of him; I give him mad props for going over there."

"I follow MXGP every weekend but I think it will be more talked about for sure. There are a lot of good riders there. Nagl is going over to Husqvarna, he is going to be good, Paulin is going to be good and obviously Cairoli is six times world champion in a row and you don't do that by being lucky. RV will have his work cut out and Cairoli will be in some of his best form."

"I think you will see Villopoto win a lot of first motos and Saturday races. When the track gets damaged and it turns into trial riding it can get ridiculous and Cairoli puts it on a whole new level. There have been races where I have seen Antonio struggling on Saturday and even in the first moto but once the track starts to break down then suddenly he is thirty seconds in the lead."

"It is hard to bet against Villopoto because he is such a dominant force and hasn't lost a championship when he has stayed healthy. I think they will battle it out and it will be an awesome race between those two but you cannot leave out Desalle and even guys like Van Horebeek. I think Villopoto will excel at the hot races at the start of the year and on those new tracks that are more jumpy...but it is hard to bet against a six times world champion too!"

"I think he will be fine in the move across because he will have Tyla around. I don't see him having a problem living over there because he'll be with his wife and one of his best long time friends. I think he will like the European way of living that is kinda low key and chilled out and through the things he is interested in like fishing and being out and about. When you've got money then you can get what you want out there. I was twenty years old and didn't even have a cellphone!"





MICHAEL LEIB

23 and forging a space as a proactive and supported privateer in AMA250SX and MX Leib had an unlucky three year spell in Europe riding Kawasakis, uncompetitive Husqvarnas and a brief outing on a factory Yamaha where injury largely kept him out of the limelight. A spectacular second place at Fermo for the 2012 Grand Prix of Italy was the highlight

"I'm surprised but I'm really excited to see him go over there. From my perspective the tracks are a lot different from what we have here [in the USA] and you have to ride them differently. It will mean a lot of adaptation but it's Ryan Villopoto! He will go out there and figure it out like everything he has done in his career."

"The tracks are so much more technical. You cannot just hold the throttle open and smash everything. Tracks like Loket and Kegums [Latvia] and these other places...you have to be so precise and pick your lines. You have to be more technical on the bike."

"I would be surprised if he is not up front from the get-go. If he is not then I'm sure he will be right after. Qatar and Thailand should be pretty basic – maybe even American style from what I have seen – whereas tracks in Italy...it should be interesting. I really enjoyed Fermo and thought it was quite American. There are some places that suit him, and others where he will be 'searching'."

"In my case I wasn't 'Ryan Villopoto' going to Europe. I was 'Michael Leib...just coming out of the amateurs'. Those first two teams I was

with in Europe...it was difficult and they were some of the hardest times in my life. When I look back there were nights when I wanted to cry myself to sleep and just get on a plane and get out of there but it built my character in a way that I never anticipated. It wasn't until I came home and made the decision not to go back did I really appreciate what a great experience it was personally. As a rider I learned some things but I was never able to show my true potential...even in Fermo. A lot of people don't know but I had been on the couch for two months. I wasn't training or riding or doing anything. My hands were completely full of blood after that second moto when I had a 27 second lead or something like that."

"I think it will be a good experience for Ryan and I hope he really embraces what it is like over there and the different cultures. That was the greatest thing for me. Every Sunday night I would just go out and have a beer by myself. I would go and people-watch in the town where I was and that was the best thing I did."

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GOING SUPERSTAR...

By Adam Wheeler



AMA Supercross was a typically slick, fast and 'shiny' show that came and went in just twelve frantic hours at the Angel Stadium. The singular most impressive aspect of the day at Anaheim – after a week of story/content grabbing for us in southern California – was seeing the surge of attention that now follows Ken Roczen. The German is still only twenty years old but has already accumulated a world championship, AMA national championship, a west coast supercross title, four Motocross of Nations wins in a row, a home Grand Prix win at fifteen years of age and is now the most popular, versatile and flawless athlete in the vast arena that is American dirt bike competition. It is a long way from Mattstedt in Germany and certainly since that first international bow at Agueda in 2009 when a nervy teenager could barely stay up in practice for his first Grand Prix.

Roczen's strength has always been the efficiency (and speed) of his adaptation. From a flamboyant teen to a resilient hard worker, to the Benelux sand (in which a degree of mastery is almost essential for MXGP championship success) to the rigours of supercross to the punishing physical regime required to make-it in the American heat of the Nationals. It feels like he has barely stuttered...and rarely makes mistakes. He is a formidable package. We knew he was special when he made the breakthrough to Grand Prix but I'm not sure any of the journalists that spoke to the skinny, exhausted and bewildered youngster after his emphatic home win at Teutschenthal in '09 could have imagined Roczen showing the supercross world a deft turn like he is currently doing on U.S. soil.

Ken has had two years to slowly learn a new set of skills that doesn't involve wheels and an engine. Good looking, (now) wealthy, faultlessly bi-lingual and eminently marketable he is the sport's dream kid – as I use the youthful moniker on account of his twenty-first birthday not coming around until April. The clamour for his attention and time at

Anaheim was staggering. So much so that he can easily consider himself in the Stewart, Carmichael, McGrath, Villopoto league of needing to escape to a vast American camper and dodge crowds that would surely eat into a timetable that barely pauses.

While it was slightly dismaying to see (or not) Ken cocooned out of public eye except when he emerged for an autograph session – for which the teams now operate on a first-come-first-served ticketing basis, like a ride at Disneyland – it was understandable for this particular character who is fast becoming the villain of the fairytale for his rivals. The majority of his lifestyle likely exists around a stringent programme overseen by trainer Aldon Baker with all the bootcamps and bare dieting, and the actual supercross events are a stressful affair of pressure and scrutiny (a minor example being this Blog). Roczen is totally in the big time thanks to the stratosphere he currently inhabits and the circle around him grows as the bonuses accumulate, his net worth increases and deals like the unexpected move to RCH begins to look very lucrative indeed.

There are some that say Ken has changed, and his selectivity with interviews and impatience with media work could remove some of that initial charm and goodwill he constructed on his journey to the U.S. for the 2012 season. Then there are others like old friend and former Suzuki GP team-mate Arnaud Tonus, now also in California with Pro Circuit, who says he thinks the German has not changed at all...even if his life has transformed enormously. My own attempts to grab Ken for five minutes post-race in the paddock fell flat –despite going through the proper channels - but I saw a little of what Arnaud meant when he answered an email within minutes on Sunday morning. If Roczen wins the 450SX campaign then I cannot help but liken him to Marc Marquez - an exemplary athlete who has achieved so much at a ridiculously early age - and wonder what might be next.



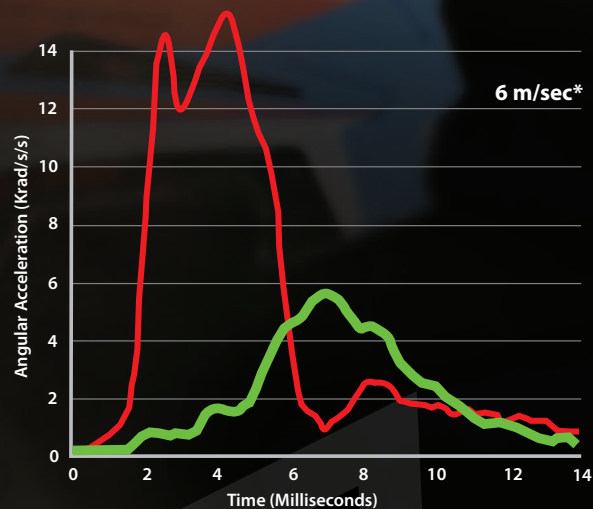
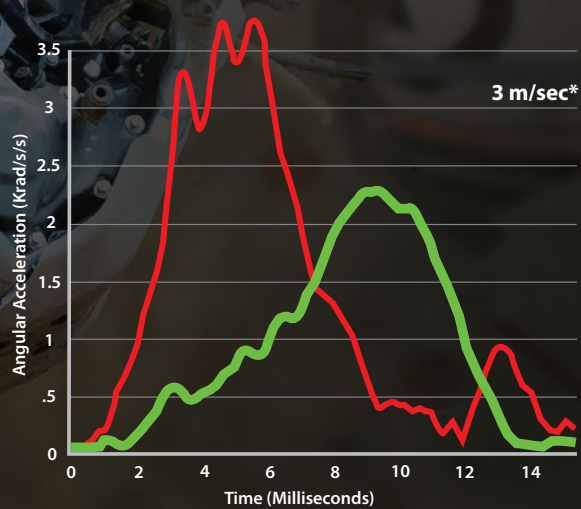
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FEATURE



LEGEND TALK

By Adam Wheeler, Photos by [www.motogp.com/World GP Bike Legends](http://www.motogp.com/WorldGPBikeLegends)

WE WERE PRIVILEGED TO RECENTLY HAVE SPENT A MORNING CHATTING WITH 1987 500CC WORLD CHAMPION AND ONE OF THE ICONS OF A FONDLY REMEMBERED ERA IN GRAND PRIX RACING WAYNE GARDNER. THE 55 YEAR OLD AUSTRALIAN IS BECOMING MUCH MORE ACTIVE AROUND THE MOTOGP SCENE AND SINCE HE CEASED CAR COMPETITION AT THE BEGINNING OF THE LAST DECADE TO SUPPORT MOTO3-BOUND TEENAGE SON REMY AND ALSO AS AN AMBASSADOR FOR THE NEW WORLD GP BIKE LEGENDS EVENT IN JEREZ ON JUNE 19TH-21ST AS PART ONE OF A REVEALING INTERVIEW WE DISCUSSED HOW THE LATE EIGHTIES-EARLY NINETIES PERIOD OF MOTOGP STILL REMAINS SO FIERCELY POPULAR AND HOW 'LEGENDS' OF MOTORCYCLE RACING GO ABOUT BEING CREATED...







TV documentaries, books and now a proper meeting with the World GP Bike Legends Your era of road racing still manages to fascinate. How did you get involved in the Jerez event and what's your take on it?

The idea was presented it to me by the people behind it and I thought 'wow'. It is essentially a Masters event and this was a first for motorcycle racing. I liked what I heard and was given the role as riders' representative or 'ambassador' like Freddie [Spencer] and Christian [Sarron] as they didn't really know anybody that could make links with the riders and get the machinery. I'm busier than hell with that at the moment. I believe in what they are doing and I think it will be a big series eventually. The 19th-21st of June is like the 'pilot' and then they will look at it and tune it up and hopefully have more success. There has already been interest from other countries, which is a good sign. All the riders I've spoken to have said: "it's fantastic". It has been well received and they are signing others up now. The concept has not been done before and I think it is needed. It is not something to compete with Grand Prix racing or anything like that but there is a void that can be filled there because of the enormous interest.

How will you approach it? Fitting the leathers and getting on the grid again is bound to get the old adrenaline flowing...

It is the race of Legends – as it is called – and I think we will all go as fast as we can without pushing to crash. We are not that silly...I hope! I think there will be a bit of excitement to it but I'm too old to be visiting hospitals so there is a limit to how fast I will go. I have to admit that riding those 500s is still so exciting. It is almost an irreplaceable feeling, so even if you ride around slowly then it is still great. I hope there will not be any accidents and I'm sure we'll have a briefing beforehand and some common sense but it has to be a good show. I've ridden around a few times with Christian, Eddie, Kenny and Freddie and you know what they are still fast riders. After all those years of hard work the talent doesn't just fall away. You do have to bring yourself back up to pace a little bit but there is a limit to which you are going to go. They said the same and that little will hold us back a little bit. The general message is that it is not a race but entertainment, and we want to have fun and make it look good. It doesn't matter where we come – it is not a world championship – and by having no ultimate prize and no ego-bashing there will be some self-control...hopefully!

How can you try to explain some of the fanaticism for your era of racing? Why are people still into it?

The motorcycling market has changed. I work for the Australian Road Safety Commission and through that you get to see many statistics. If you look at the sales then the amount of young people buying bikes is going down, mainly through legislation and licencing to reduce accidents and deaths on the road. There have been more stringent tests to get through because of that. So a lot of people buying bikes now tend to be 40+ and were watching us when we were racing and remember the names. I think it resonates. There were bigger characters in the sport back then who were more accessible. The paddock is not open any more. I think 500s grew to be a bit of a cult. It had a lot of crashes, highsides and great racing. Now you have Rossi – and I guess Marquez is a character as well – but these guys are not as accessible. The bikes now are easier to ride and electronics means that they are controllable with less crashes. Maybe the feeling has gone a little bit. It is funny because I thought people would have forgotten my name but if I go into a restaurant in Spain then ‘Wayne Gardner’ gets recognised and I have people telling me that we were the real heroes; the Schwantz’s, Doohan’s, Gardner’s and so on. I tend to ask them about Marquez and those guys but the feeling is that we were a likeable group and were more interesting. I think what has happened – in this country [Spain] at least – is that it has become so popular that every class is won by Spaniards and maybe the interest is going down because people like to see a mix. Dorna have done such a good job promoting it here that there seems to be nothing but Spanish [in GP]. Anyway I think this 40+ group have good memories and they have kids and want to bring them to meet their heroes.

When I gave up bike racing I started with the cars and I thought ‘no-ones going to give a shit about me in a car’ but what happened is that my fans started hearing my name in the cars and turning up to those events. When I went to Japan and raced sportscars there for five years for Toyota the same thing: the bikes fans there saw my name as part of the GT series and started coming along with their kids. When I went to Suzuka in 2013 and rode around with Eddie and Freddie and everybody...they were all there again. So I think there are fans of the sport that follow the names and that’s a good example of what World GP Bike Legends is about and that’s why it is important to get as many world champions as possible onboard.

You say that riders today are not as accessible but thanks to social media we can see what someone like Marc Marquez is doing every day. There is less intimacy perhaps and you guys tended to be more mysterious because of the ‘distance’...

Social media and computers have changed the world a lot since we were racing and you’re right there was more mystique, I guess. However the fans now cannot really meet these people. They cannot really see them at the racetrack and that’s different to what it was like back in the ‘80s. I understand the reasons for closing the paddock when it comes to security and safety and lot of stuff has been stolen over the years. I remember having motorhomes and it was fine during the night but if you left a bicycle outside and it wasn’t chained up then it was gone the next day! You don’t really have that now because of security and through minimising people that are in there. It is good in a way...but the bad thing is that people don’t have that access. At Jerez one ticket will get you everywhere.

A successful Masters series would also somehow mean that riders don't just drift out of the public domain...

It is a good way for riders to go onto something else instead of retiring and then falling off the face of the earth. A lot of riders fall on some hard times when they retire. Some have obviously been very bright and have had good people around them. Others have - and had - difficulties. I know a number of riders who have so little left.

You stopped in 1992. How did you find retirement? Someone like Casey Stoner seemed ready and keen to embrace it...

It is difficult. Extremely difficult. I'm sure Casey will be happy with his home life for a while and he wants to be with his wife and daughter and I understand that completely but as soon as you retire...it is like one day you are a hero around the world and the next day you are forgotten. You have had this loyalty and free things, sponsorship and people bowing to you and the feeling that everything turns to gold...but when you stop you see the start of a steady decline in popularity, sponsorship, funds and work. I think it is quite hard for some riders that are not prepared for it properly or haven't invested in the right way. This [World GP Bike Legends] could provide a softer landing.

What about a link with MotoGP?

Possibly. I think this could be a big deal by itself and you couldn't really integrate it on the same weekend as a GP because there isn't the paddock space or the room in the timetable. I think it is more of a standalone show.

Who were your heroes how do you think your sons Remy and Luca discover and appreciate their idols now? Is there much difference?

I used to look at Kenny Roberts, Barry Sheene, Randy Mamola. I used to idolise Randy because I was a kid at a similar age. I remember seeing him in the magazines and he was road-racing at fourteen, and I recall thinking 'god, how good is that?!' I was a dirt bike rider then. I admired him and wanted to be like him one day. There were people like Gregg Hansford as well and Warren Willing and the Australian contingent but I was in awe of those other people [GP riders] and dreamed about being with them one day and being a world champion. All I have to say about that it is dreams can come true if you want it hard enough and push it hard enough. Differences to Remy and Luca? It's a good question and I haven't thought about it that way before.

You saw people in magazines. Youngsters can use Youtube and seem to have many other ways to form their opinions of what makes a 'hero'...

Yeah...there is more ways to find stuff. Someone asked me the other day "do the kids watch your old races?" and I went "no, they don't really." They've seen Phillip Island [wins in 1989 and 1990] and a couple of races but they are not that interested! They are getting on with their own careers and lives. They are obviously proud of what I have done and recognise the knowledge I have but they are off on their own mission. Remy has his own styles, hobbies and heroes. It is different...maybe it is a question more for him than me.

Maybe heroes are created from the characters of a show. It can be as simple as 'wild versus smooth', 'blue versus red', the rider that poses for a photo or ignores the kid who has been waiting...

All of that helps create the persona and the character. Not just walking past and ignoring people – fans – is something that I learnt at a young age because if you want sponsors then you need to have fans. You are as good as your fans and your last result too. I enjoy meeting people, talking to them, laughing and socialising. I'm not one of these closed people that will run away from a signature or something like that. There are riders out there like that and people don't respond to it and it shows now. I know that Schwantz's popularity is huge because he gets out there...There seemed to be more personas in those days than there are now.

Impressions were important. Back in the day we only had access through a circuit tannoy interview or a TV clip. Now you can know what a rider thinks and is doing minutes after a session. If we heard you optimistic and enthusiastic through those limited means then it conveyed your character much more acutely...

Yeah, perhaps it is almost the reverse of what I was saying earlier. All the social media stuff has brought the fans too close in one way and the exclusivity isn't there. If you see the Twitter stuff then it is rampant for the '80s history and the past. There is a huge appetite...I have to also say that all the riders are different now. When I sit down with Kenny, Eddie or Freddie and have a few drinks at the bar the stories that come out are unbelievable. Stories that have never been told. I sit there and listen to them and they are amazing. Like Freddie...We were talking about 1984 and I said "remember the Dutch TT when you won...what bike was

that?" and he'd say my NSR-whatever and it was a close race but he only won because he had the engine 039872658 NSR. I'd say: "what was that?" and he'd reply "the crankcase number". Then he'd go "I remember because that engine always gave me 200rpm more than the other one". I'd say "how on earth do you remember that?!". He could go into detail on every lap what gearing, main jets, rpm and this other stuff with a photographic memory. I went "my god!" I can remember lots but not about what the bike was doing, on what corner this-and-that happened. I was like "wow" and was thinking 'imagine if people got to hear this'.

There must be a big market for those anecdotes...

A big market! And I'm sure people would love to hear it. Part of the World GP Bike Legends will be putting on these little chat shows and forums and for questions to be asked. I think it will be very interesting. As I mentioned the riders are different. At the time we were all like fierce gladiators and against each other. We wouldn't give too much away and said certain stuff and kept things to a minimum. Now the swords are on the floor and we can be totally open and say what we want. It is just funny now. If anything the camaraderie between us now is just fantastic. Even someone like my arch-rival Eddie Lawson...I think he is fantastic. I was watching that 'Unrideables' show and he said something like "ah man, that Gardner he was the toughest and hardest. I have so much respect for him"...but he didn't say it at the time. For me I would never admit that he was an amazing rider...but I do now because it is all water under the bridge. It is kinda really nice times and when I heard about this series I thought 'perfect' because I thought it would be a great opportunity to re-live all this and let the fans hear it.



The fans and media will be amazed by some of the stories and details that will come out. It is about riding the bikes around but it also about connecting everything up in the scene. Some guy on Twitter asked if he could meet me and shake my hand at the event and I replied saying 'yeah and you can meet the other Legends too' and he was sold. The riders are really cool now and they want to make time for the fans. It is really exciting I think.

Did you get an idea of how you won fans? Aside from results how did people gravitate towards you and ultimately take you as their hero?

I think it was a number of things. It is obviously the persona on TV or through the media as well as being the guy out there winning. Don't forget I raced in the UK for five years before I went to GP so I was provided an opportunity to get there by the British and I considered myself a British-son. Whenever there were Transatlantic races then I ride for the Brits. I think they took me under their wing and I came across as an outgoing character and personality. I told [Graeme] Crosby this the other day because he showed up before me in GP and I just watched what he did and thought it was fantastic. I told him in Japan recently that I emulated his career but added a bit more twist to it and he didn't know that. I said I was thanking him for showing me a path. I said I did what the Japanese do...copy

it and make it better! He laughed. You know it is a lot about how you present yourself to the general public, how you address the media, showing that you are enjoying yourself. One crucial thing – and I think Rossi and Marquez both show this so much – is that you show you love riding motorbikes and you love racing. I still love motorbikes. Last year I was in Japan and Kenny was riding a 500 and Eddie was on a four-stroke, eight-hour bike. I came past wide open and when we pulled in he said: "I'm so jealous. Man, they sound so good, so fast". It is a passion. Fans? I think it is a combination of the characters and the bikes and the era and how you carried yourself. If you came across as someone who was quiet at that time then you were easily forgotten. If you were happy and seemed like you were enjoying yourself then you were more of a personality.



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MARQUEZ STILL WINNING...

By Matthew Roberts



So here we are once more almost at the start of another road racing season and, like every January, I find myself in melancholy mood wondering where the time went. In fact, it was only this time last year that I wrote a blog about my early days as a young journalist working for Dorna, cold-calling the likes of Garry McCoy and Johan Stigefelt to generate priceless copy for motogp.com during the barren slow news slog of the long winter break (Max Biaggi would have been better, of course, but he wasn't answering his Monaco cell phone... you get the picture).

Thankfully, or maybe not, things are much different now and you can't switch on your phone, tablet or laptop without seeing that Aleix Esparagaró has tweeted a selfie with his cute new dog or Jorge Lorenzo has uploaded his breakfast to Facebook. Nowadays riders understand more than ever the importance of building their relationship with fans through the media and unsurprisingly it is Marc Marquez who has once again raised the bar during this off-season.

Whilst Marquez may already be a double World Champion and the biggest thing to happen to the sport since Valentino Rossi, his global profile still lags some way behind that of the Italian icon - and even that of Lorenzo. Take their Facebook pages, for example, and you will see that Marquez, who is now up to 3 million 'likes,' still trails Lorenzo by almost a million, whilst Rossi is way ahead of the pair of them on an incredible 10.3 million likes.

This kind of statistic will not have escaped the obsessively attentive eye of Marquez and his PR machine, which like his RCV Honda is the slickest on the grid. They recently ensured a turnout of over 100 journalists to the launch of the new Official Fan Club Headquarters in Cervera by offering to cover travel expenses.

CNN World and BBC World were both on hand and their video reports will have been seen by millions in every corner of the planet.

Marc's Facebook page is regularly updated with behind-the-scenes training videos and photos, whilst the Superprestigio dirt-track event he helped stage (and won) in Barcelona in December was available as a free live stream on the internet. What better way to get bike racing fans onside than by offering them some free action? Like everything the kid does, its genius lies in its simplicity.

Even Marc's relationship with his brother Alex has been cleverly used to help cultivate a boy-next-door image that no doubt helped to protect his reputation during the recent controversy regarding his intention to move to Andorra (allegedly for the purpose of avoiding tax in Spain but he claims it is for more effective training), a story that generated public outrage.

Take the latest video on Marc's Facebook page for instance. It's a new television commercial for a yoghurt brand, starring the two brothers. The gist is that Marc has a fridge full of yoghurts but he's so kind that he gives them all away, even giving one to his pesky little bro, right up until there is just one left, which he keeps for himself. The clever tag line, "It's impossible to be so good" may even be a tongue-in-cheek reference to the Andorra polemic; if so, it's straight out of the Rossi copybook.

Just like his hero there is a killer instinct behind the broad smile of this baby-faced assassin and cheekily making light of precarious situations is one of his greatest strengths - both on the track and off it. Surely, with his work ethic and guile, it's only a matter of time before he is the ultimate master of both.

STIRRING THE CASH POT...

By David Emmett

Two words have dominated all forms of motorcycle racing since the global financial crisis: cost cutting. When sponsorship evaporated, especially from racing's core markets in Spain and Italy, Grand Prix racing's only option was to reduce budget. Since 2008, a whole raft of new regulations and classes have been introduced, their main objective being to reduce costs. Whether those regulations have been effective in doing so, however, very much open to debate.

MotoGP's support classes offer clear and contrasting examples of what works and what doesn't. The aim of the Moto2 and Moto3 categories was to end the de facto monopoly which Aprilia held over their predecessors; the 250 and 125cc divisions. As Aprilia was the only supplier willing to invest in supplying up-to-date two-stroke racing machinery, they effectively controlled who succeeded and who failed. If you had a factory-spec RSA Aprilia (or an RSA rebadged as a Derbi, or Gilera), then you could win races and had a shot at the title. If you didn't, you were basically left to scrap for points, and the lower echelons of the top ten.

It was this monopoly which drove prices through the roof. Aprilia only produced a set number of RSA-spec machines, in both 125s and 250s, and selected who would get a bike and who wouldn't. The cost of leasing an Aprilia RSA 250 was around 1 million euro, which you had to hand back at the end of the year. The 125s were not that much cheaper, and in similarly short supply. Only Honda putting massive resources behind one or two riders prevented Aprilia from utter domination.

The introduction of Moto2 had a dramatic effect on cost in the intermediate class. Now, a team could run a competitive bike for a quarter of the price (or less) of a top-spec 250. With a choice of

chassis manufacturers, there was ample supply of competitive kit as well. No longer did a team's results rely solely on having large sums of money combined with the right connections in Noale. A talented rider, backed by a solid and competent team, was capable of getting results. Yes, the same teams were still winning – the richest teams could afford the best riders, crew chiefs, and mechanics – but it was much easier, and much more common, for a shining racer to make an impact.

The key factor in all this was the elimination of engine competition. With everyone on the same, standard, mildly tuned Honda CBR600RR motor, the easy advantage of a more powerful engine was gone. Advantages were to be had from optimising mappings, chassis geometry, suspension set up. The teams who worked most methodically reaped the biggest benefits.

For many people, removing engine development was heresy. Moto2 was no longer a Grand Prix class, where specially designed racing thoroughbreds were pitted against one another by fiercely competitive manufacturers. Instead, it was glorified production racing, or worse, a Honda cup class, with near identical bikes competing against each other.

To meet those objections, the Moto3 class was opened to all engine manufacturers, subject to a cost cap. Each manufacturer had to be willing to supply at least 15 riders, with prices capped at 12,000 euro per engine. The idea was that by controlling engine costs directly, the cost of the entire bike could be kept within reason.

It didn't work, of course. Honda built a bike that respected the spirit of the rules, and was an affordable way to go racing. KTM, however, read the letter of the rules, spotted the loophole, and pro-



ceeded to drive a 250,000 euro racing motorcycle through it. KTM's engines were only available as part of a complete package, and though the engine was cheap, the chassis it came wrapped in was breathtakingly expensive. KTM dominated the first two seasons of Moto3, much to the dismay of Honda. Pit Beirer then added insult to injury by suggesting that the spirit of the rules was irrelevant. "If they are not interested in the title, they should stay at home," he told a German magazine.

That was a red rag to a bull, and in 2014, Honda returned with a vengeance. After disposing of most of their customers by refusing to discuss their plans until October 2013, they fielded a full-factory effort with a completely redesigned bike, which took Alex Márquez to the Moto3 title. Teams who weren't Estrella Galicia were rumoured to be paying up to 400,000 euro for the Honda NSF250RW. Once again, the engine was cheap, it just wasn't available without the rest of the package.

That loophole has been closed for 2015, with price caps on both engines and rolling chassis. A full Moto3 engine package may cost up to 68,000 euro for a season, a full rolling chassis 85,000 euro. Looking at the rules, there seem to be very few loopholes left for the factories to raise prices. The risk is that we have underestimated their ingenuity. I would not be surprised to find that KTM's and Honda's Moto3 bikes now come complete with an engineer, charged at an exorbitant rate. That, after all, is how Öhlins has been operating in MotoGP for some time now.

What lessons can we take from the rule changes in the support classes? First and foremost, that trying to contain costs using the technical rules is like trying to transport custard with a fork. Moto2 has succeeded in reducing costs, but only by

sacrificing engine development. The spec engine keeps the class cheap, but it reduces technical interest, and leaves the class somehow diminished. Aurally, it is the least interesting race of the weekend, the whine of identically tuned CBR600s a bland, monotonous background to otherwise entertaining action.

In Moto3, the introduction of price caps has seen the rule makers desperately plugging loopholes opened up by the law of unintended consequences. Whether the introduction of a price cap on a complete bike will be more successful remains to be seen, but it is hard to be optimistic. It is still cheaper for teams to contest Moto2 than to race in Moto3, and that does not look likely to change. And if any manufacturer is willing to bear the cost themselves, they can still dominate a class, by selling highly competitive bikes well below the cost of producing them. It is expensive, but it can be effective, as Honda demonstrated in 2014.

Is it possible to have old-fashioned Grand Prix racing at a reasonable price? Can the world's best riders compete on thoroughbred race bikes designed without the shackles of severe technical limitations, without costs also spiralling out of control? On the basis of the evidence, you'd have to say only no. The future of all three classes in MotoGP is one of increasing technical restrictions, in an attempt to keep it affordable.

Unless, of course, the sport is able to attract major investment from outside sponsors. If that happens, I'll be booking my tickets for the Winter Olympics in Hell...



JASON NAR



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CAGING THE BEAST

**A WEEK WITH THE KTM 1290 SUPER DUKE
AND WHY YOU SHOULD CONSIDER A BANK LOAN**

By Adam Wheeler, Photos by JP Acevedo www.mx1onboard.com





BIKE TESTS TEND TO TAKE PLACE ON SCENIC WINDY ROADS, RACETRACKS OR IDYLIC SURROUNDINGS THAT (FAIR ENOUGH) ALLOW A FULL APPRECIATION OF THE MOTORCYCLE'S MERITS. WE WANTED A SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT TAKE ON KTM'S FLAGSHIP STREET MODEL WHICH ALSO GOES BY THE MONIKER OF 'THE BEAST' AND THANKS TO KTM SPAIN WE WERE ABLE TO LIVE WITH THE 1290 SUPERDUKE IN THE CITY OF BARCELONA FOR THE EIGHT DAYS. WHAT HAPPENED?

First off, there is no disputing the fact that shelling out on the SD1290 delivers a head-turner. The audible from the 1300cc 75 degree twin gathers enough attention as it is but the black version we were granted is certainly a fetching animal thanks to those lines, angles and aggressive baulk.

Barcelona is home to a full gamut of motorcycles of all shapes and sizes, states and performance. I've seen numerous Super Dukes on the roads in the forms of the 125, 390 and 690s but did not catch a glimpse of a 1290 until, oddly, the first day I was gliding down the city's principal thoroughfare, the six lane behemoth that is Diagonal, a road that cuts the 'ciutat' in half, well, diagonally. The other rider and I looked at each other on these matching rare machines (the only difference was the KTM Spain 1290 came with a Powerparts modified seat) with a little nod of recognition and no doubt shared knowledge that we were among the lucky few.

At traffic lights stares are plentiful and when we park the bike at the top of Montjuic park for some static pictures two Italian tourists even ask permission to take their own photographs.

Like expensive cars, watches, Apple products or consumer goods of a similar ilk it is reassuring that the cost associated with a technically advanced, exciting and stylish item like the SD1290 provides the necessary status that comes with such a financial outlay. The Duke stands out that much that I'm wary of leaving it parked in busy streets with hundreds of other bikes while heading into a coffee bar armed with the laptop.

When we picked up the bike from KTM Spain in the town of Terrassa a twenty minute ride north west of the city we spoke with staff and they admitted they were sceptical of shipping units of the SD1290 (heavy-going at 17,000 euros) in a market that has plummeted since the end of the last decade amid a society in the mire of financial mess, corruption and burgeoning unemployment. To their surprise the Daddy of the Dukes filled the order quota and there are now people waiting for the bikes. It seems the marketing around the SD1290 and the overall experience it promises caught the imagination and through actually living with the Duke for a few days it is easy to see and feel why. There is a sense of exclusivity about it. Among all the black shimmering technology there is always a feature that catches the eye. The vast twin dominates the overall look of the motorcycle; like some rapier, sporty chopper. And if you work your way back along the form then the single sided swingarm shouts modernity and the kind of panache that any Italian craftsman would be happy with.

Chief designer of KTM's motorcycles for almost twenty-five years, Gerald Kiska, admitted on the manufacturer's official Blog last December that the ethos around the image for KTM involves "clear marks of being orange, a bit edgy, loud and noisy." The 56 year old was

also important in how the Austrians were able to launch the bike. The Beast quickly had a narrative. "I think the campaign – or the whole movement starting from the prototype drawings to the videos that have been seen more than two million times on Youtube - and the whole hype we created was probably the best integrated activity we have done so far," he said to www.blog.ktm.com. "Almost all the departments in our company were involved and almost all in KTM as well: from R&D to marketing and everybody."

Other highlights include the luminous frame that wraps everything around the powerplant and little basics like the fashioned rear mud-guard, angular tank (common to other latest generation Super Dukes) and pointed rear-view mirrors that work quite well even if they are a little small.





FEATURE

1 WEEK WITH **SC** 290



You'll need a decent sized leg to throw over the SD1290 with the Powerparts seat. The engine hikes the riding position up but it is single-handedly one of the most comfortable motorcycles I've steered. This is thanks to a stance that sits you inside the bike but also a little on top. Once nestled then it is hard to tell what kind of roadster you are in control of. Just a glimpse of the chunky wheel over the edge of the headlight means you feel poised with the front end and have no qualms about yanking the wide bars around for tighter corners and the odd roundabout. I cannot recall the Duke feeling heavy at any point, even after a refill of the generous eighteen litre tank.

Riding the Super Duke is how I expected. There is a sea of torque. After reading reviews in magazines and online it is true that the power winds-on in one great wave. This is the heart of the SD1290 and the essence of what makes this motorcycle special. I escape the city and get up to good speed in an hour ride north to interview Monster Energy Kawasaki Racing Team's Tyla Rattray and still marvel at the ease with which bikes like the Super Duke can put you into licence-losing territory with the speed traps. Back in the city and the infrequent blast away from traffic lights and around some rare free roads also give chance to explore the engine potential, tall gearing and over-generous sensation of propulsion.

As with most bikes electronics permit map choice: Rain, Street and Sport. Sport is undoubtedly the most fun and does everything quicker and a lot snappier but for most of the commute around the city Street suffices. Much has been made of the Beast's 'roar' but the management system on this brute can turn it into a docile and extremely easy and pleasant ride. My eight year old son is partly fearful but mostly thrilled when he has a choice between the SD1290 and our 125 Honda Scoopy run-around for getting to a birthday party and his basketball match. The Duke wins every time in the pillion's opinion. On the day when the Duke has to go back to Terrassa it is raining heavily in and around Barcelona. The roads and motorways are soaked and while not the most

comfortable experience it does provide a great situation for testing the Rain setting, which ultimately smoothens the Duke even further, reduces gearing and again proves to be another asset and example of how KTM got this right.



Inner city Barcelona is condensed and heavily residential. We are talking about 39 square miles with a population of more than 1.5 million. A lot of movement, not so much space and lights on every corner. The metropolis has focused – unsuccessfully – in reducing urban transit and the resulting pollution according to EU guidelines. So the quantity of vehicles and traffic means a lot of pottering on the Duke. Considering the force from the twin it is surprisingly calm when it comes to vibration. Maybe the worst part about having the SD1290 in rush hour and thick traffic is the heat generated by the engine. It verges on stifling (in autumnal temperatures). This is clearly a motorcycle that needs to 'breathe' quite often. I imagine in summer it would be like sitting on a stove...but then I guess that's another reason for why the throttle is so wickedly efficient; to get you going. Fuel consumption is reasonable and the SD's mass is rigidly stopped thanks to some chunky four piston Brembos and large 320 discs (with ABS).

The sheer number of scooters and practical powered two-wheelers in Barcelona means that it is clear that the city's inhabitants use their bikes as means-to-an-end as well as a form of enjoyment. The SD1290 cannot score too highly in the functional stakes in comparison and, as mentioned, there is anxiety over the security of this fancy piece of kit but it feels more than just a posing device. The Duke dares you to push when the opportunity presents itself but also has no qualms about being used as a gutsy commuter that will guarantee a 100% win rate away from the lights and is nimble enough to be guided and filtered through traffic lines without concern.

I did wonder if the Super Duke 1290 would be a little too excessive for urban life but this was not the case. Of course you can go cheaper and blander but this is against the point in celebrating the fact that you're out there motorcycling. Overall this is the best testament that can be made to KTM's efforts here. The SD1290 perhaps shouldn't be that versatile but it is. On the rare moments when you can just go for a blast and evade the 'red-amber-green' then you suddenly find a formidable machine that can drag you almost out of the seat.

We only racked up a few hundred kilometres and we've seen comments about fiddly electronics (just plan your trip) and suspect fuel reserve but a few days after the bike was returned I found myself missing the possibility to excitedly run errands that require slightly more distance and the Duke was a special way to live for two wheels. Whether it's for every day purposes or a weekend plaything the SD1290 subverts its price and perception of a luxury toy to be something that will engage the needs of any motorcyclist.

TESTED: PUMA FLAT 2 BOOTS

The immediate benefit from these urban-purpose riding boots comes when you slide the footwear into place. The fit is narrow but the shoes – like most Puma products – is comfortable and well designed. The 360 ankle 'cock-pit' means that it feels stable and secure and the flexi-sections on the uppers basically give the feeling of a pair of robust trainers. Not sure about the shiny finish in some parts but these have been replaced by matte styling for 2015. Overall a nice blend between practical and fashionable; this seems to be the main angle for Puma against some of the more 'traditional' bike apparel brands



1 WEEK WITH SD 1290

S U P E R D U K E





DUCATI SCRAMBLER

REAPING THE HYPE

By Roland Brown
Photos by Milagro

DUCATI DECIDED TO ROAD LAUNCH THEIR NEW SCRAMBLER IN AN [UN]SUNNY CALIFORNIA BUT THE STRANGE CLIMATE ON THE WEST COAST COULD NOT DENT ROLAND'S CURIOSITY FOR THE ITALIAN'S ATTEMPT TO MAKE A NEW SPLASH ON THE MARKET



The Scrambler's launch in Palm Springs was hit by rain that broke California's long drought. Ducati can't control everything, it seems. But the Italian firm has carefully orchestrated every other aspect of the introduction of a bike whose status as an entry-level model, designed to attract riders from other brands and especially from outside motorcycling, has made it the subject of an unprecedented promotional campaign.

This included videos, a maelstrom of social media and the "beach" that Ducati set up in its Bologna factory car park last summer to let workers glimpse a prototype inside a large crate. Ducati's so-called "Land of Joy", created at the major European bike shows, was crammed with Scramblers plus the vast range of related clothing and accessories.

The irony is that beneath all the hype, the Scrambler is a refreshingly down-to-earth naked motorbike. It's an 803cc, air-cooled V-twin, styled to resemble the single-cylinder machines of that name that the Italian firm built in the Seventies. It has a tubular steel frame, fairly basic suspension and brakes and an upright riding position.



Perhaps the only remotely complicated aspect is that the Scrambler is essentially four-bikes-in-one, all sharing the same engine and frame but with subtly different styling. The distinct parts that differentiate the base-model Icon, retro Classic, dual-purpose Urban Enduro and sport Full Throttle (see sidebar) are designed to fit all four models, enabling Ducati to tap into the current craze for customising.

The shared motor is essentially the sohc desmo V-twin from the Monster 796, though it's detuned slightly from 87 to 75bhp, with new camshafts, intake and exhaust systems. The frame is new although very much in Ducati tradition. At 186kg the bike is respectably light. Its cycle parts include non-adjustable forks and a diagonally mounted shock that operates directly on the aluminium swing-arm.

Riding the Scrambler is a simple process, with no alternative engine modes to think about. Just grip the wide, one-piece handlebar, press the starter button, and the engine fires up with a soft V-twin note from the stubby silencer, sounding and feeling much like the now discontinued Monster 796. Despite being detuned it feels enjoyably lively, with the emphasis on midrange grunt rather than high-revving power.

TEST

Throttle response can be very slightly jerky in the lower gears, but generally the Scrambler is admirably controllable. That broad power band means it always seems to be in the right gear and to have a useful burst of acceleration in hand. It cruises smoothly and effortlessly at 70mph, puts 100mph on the speedo quickly, and is good for about 130mph – fast enough for most, given the exposed riding position.

Chassis performance is similarly rider-friendly, blending stability with light, easy steering. The wide handlebar gives plenty of leverage, combining with fairly sporty geometry to make the bike easy to flick into turns. Suspension is well up to the job, too: soft enough to soak up most bumps yet firm enough to make the Scrambler feel taut and controllable.

The seat's quite slim but sufficiently well padded to contribute to a comfortable ride. A pillion gets fairly generous accommodation but no proper grab-rail to hold. Other chassis bits work well, notably the front brake, which combines a large 330mm disc with radial four-piston caliper and gives plenty of stopping power, backed-up by the smaller rear disc plus an efficient ABS system.



The Scrambler is not designed primarily for practicality but should be easy to live with. That shapely tank holds just 13.5 litres but that's enough for over 100 miles at a typical 45mpg average. Quality of finish and detailing seems generally good, though the lack of a fuel gauge or gear indicator is disappointing. You do however get a useful USB socket and phone pocket under the seat.

Ducati's efforts to create four different models should mean that there's one to suit most potential riders' tastes. And to suit many pockets because the Scrambler is inexpensive by Ducati standards with the Icon substantially cheaper than its siblings (in the UK it's £6995 in yellow and £6895 in red, compared to £7995 for the others).

Even those prices are high for entry-level equipment, but Ducati reports that initial orders are very strong, suggesting the Scrambler is likely to be the firm's best selling model in many markets. How much of that success will be down to the high-profile marketing campaign is open to debate. What's more certain is that the bike that caused all the fuss is stylish, reasonably versatile and a whole lot of fun to ride.

DUCATI SCRAMBLER



D

TEST



The base-model Scrambler Icon (as tested) combines yellow or red paintwork with cast wheels. The Classic has an even more retro look, and comes with orange paint, brown seat and wire-spoked wheels. The dual-purpose themed Urban Enduro has green finish plus a headlamp grille, engine bash-plate and wire wheels. The sporty Full Throttle gets lower handlebar, humped seat, Termignoni silencer and cast wheels.

DUCATI SCRAMBLER



PRO CIRCUIT

Ideal combination for supercross and American motocross fans this. World famous tuning and servicing firm Pro Circuit have allied with Monster and Ogio to create their own line of luggage and bags. Everything from kit cases, backpacks, cabin transport and helmet containment is available in distinctive shades of green and black.

For more information on the dimensions of the products and delivery options then visit: www.procircuit.com









ALPINESTARS

A couple of picks from Alpinestars' 2015 Spring collection. The Faster shoe is shown for men (top) and women (Stella version below, optimised for women's fit) and the company claim that the footwear (with distinct F1 styling, we think) "has superb anatomical profiling and comfort features. With a sole construction that offers performance flexibility and structural integrity and an upper cut from a technical microfiber, the Faster Shoe is durable and abrasion resistant." The SP-1 boot (all-black model shown here) is a little more comprehensive in terms of protection and designed for perhaps even longer time in the saddle. What is interesting is the lacing system, something that Alpinestars say "incorporates kevlar fibers from Dupont and is derived from Alpinestars MotoGP technology to ensure quick, precise and secure closure." Lastly the Charger R backpack comes with an 18 litre storage capacity, exclusive quick release system, 'S' design for the shoulders ensuring maximum comfort and engineering to provide "superb" aerodynamics. The Charger R should cost around 130 dollars/euros

www.alpinestars.com





BACKPAGE

Monster Energy Girls
by Ray Archer







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'On-track Off-road' is a free, bi-weekly publication for the screen focused on bringing the latest perspectives on events, blogs and some of the very finest photography from the three worlds of the FIM Motocross World Championship, the AMA Motocross and Supercross series' and MotoGP. 'On-track Off-road' will be published online at www.ontrackoffroad.com every other Tuesday. To receive an email notification that a new issue available with a brief description of each edition's contents simply enter an address in the box provided on the homepage. All email addresses will be kept strictly confidential and only used for purposes connected with OTOR.

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